



The heritage flight program has flown aircraft during open houses and airshows across the country. This year is the second in which the F-35 Lightning II has participated in the heritage program. From Feb. 9 to Feb. 12 the F-35 flew in formations with several aircraft including the F-22 Raptor, A-10 Thunderbolt, F-16 Fighting Falcon, P-38 Lightning and P-51 Mustangs during the Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The purpose of this course was to prepare aircraft teams for airshows they are scheduled to travel to throughout 2017.



P-51 Mustangs and an F-35 Lightning II break formation during the Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course Feb. 9, 2017, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. Heritage and demonstration teams need to be certified annually to participate in open houses and air shows worldwide. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman James Hensley)

F35 Crew Complete Heritage Flight Training

Luke Air Force Base Public Affairs

"We get to bring the F-35 to the public through the heritage flights which really honors the past and present of airpower," said Maj. Will Andreotta, 61st Fighter Squadron F-35 heritage flight pilot. "It's an amazing honor and experience to be a part of the F-35 program in general. It is the cutting edge of what we have out there and it shows people a little bit of the capabilities of the aircraft and give them a chance to talk to us so we can tell them how great this plane really is."

Andreotta was able to fly the F-35 alongside a P-51 and P-38 in formations during the Heritage Flight Training and Certification Course.

"It's important to show people what airpower was and is," Andreotta said. "This aircraft is going to be the backbone of the United States Air Force. The planes that we're flying with, the P-51 and P-38, were the backbone back in the greatest generation that we have so this is really a passing of the torch between what the backbone was previously and what we have now."

It's not just about the aerial maneuvers and flyovers performed during the airshow but also about the maintenance performed to keep the planes flying.

"I make sure we have a safe and reliable aircraft and also manage the maintenance of the aircraft," said Senior Master Sgt. Sam Smith, 61st Aircraft Maintenance Unit F-35 heritage flight superintendent. "We get to showcase what we were and what we are now. Our team is the best there is. They amaze me every day and I'm proud to be a part of this team."

The flight schedule will be released soon for all air shows and open houses the teams are planned to participate in.

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